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'stew', is, in fact, the general term used for cooking. The chief methods used are the following: 252

1. *Stewing* (*ukuipika*). By this method the food is placed in cold water in an open earthenware vessel and left to simmer from three to six hours over the fire, with additional water added if necessary. Meat and fish are stewed till the flesh falls apart from the bone and a rich gravy (*umuto*), considered a great delicacy, has been formed. Green vegetables are also stewed, fresh peas and beans to form the dish known as *imifoba*, and also the green leaf relish, whether the wild spinaches or the cultivated plants such as cassava leaves, bean, cow-pea, pumpkin, &c., leaves, which form the very common Bemba dish known as *umusalu*. Gourds of different kinds are also boiled in water until they are soft, and sweet potatoes cooked similarly with broad leaves put to cover the pot so as to prevent evaporation. Maize cobs are also most commonly boiled (*kunwenena*).

Dried foods such as beans and peas are usually stewed four or five hours over a low fire until a sort of puree or paste is formed (*mintipu*), or the same dish may be dried still harder and patted into a solid cake known as *citata*, which is an unpopular kind of food only prepared in the hunger months when it is eaten in the absence of porridge.

2. *Stewing with ground-nut sauce* (*ukusashila*). The art of good cooking among the Bemba is to have sufficient ground-nut sauce (*ntwilo*) to add to other relishes to make them palatable. To make the sauce the nuts are pounded into shreds in a mortar (*ukutwilq*) and these shreds constantly taken out in the hand and squeezed into a small bowl of water, so that the white oil from the nuts makes a milky fluid. The residue is then returned to the mortar and pounded again until the last drop of oil is extracted and a thickish cream results. The *ntwilo* is then ready for use. It is poured on to any cooked relish, and the whole stewed up again for a short time with the addition of salt. *Ntwilo* is thought to make meat or fish stews specially nice, and to be appetizing with stewed spinaches, locusts, or caterpillars, but with the tasteless dried leaf relishes and mushrooms it is considered almost essential. [244] Hence the insistence of the Bemba cultivator that he must grow at least one patch of ground-nuts every season, although in actual practice he rarely succeeds in producing sufficient to last through the year.

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(*b*) *The Cultivation of Subsidiary Crops.*

The subsidiary crops of the Bemba are planted either (*a*) with the staple crop, e.g. cucurbits planted round the edge of an *icitemene* garden, or perennial Kaffir corn sown broadcast with it sometimes; (*b*) on an old burnt garden (*icifwani*) after the millet has been reaped off it; (*c*) on the beds round the village (*mputa*).

Ground-nuts (*mbalala*). Ground-nuts, the crop that comes next in importance to millet, are usually sown in an old burnt garden, after the straw of the millet of the previous year has been burnt (*ukuoce mpimbili*) in the dry weather, October or November. The soil is then hoed up very roughly. The seeds are sown in the early rains (November–December), and can be planted if necessary up till the mid-rains (January). To plant them the sower makes a series of dents in the soil with a hoe (about 18 inches apart) while another follows and drops the seeds in one at a time to a depth of 3–5 inches. The earth is then trodden in with the feet. A man and his wife often hoe in this way, side by side, while a child follows and drops in the seed, or at a chief's court a party of *umulasa* workers go out together planting the field in groups of ten to twenty. I have also seen a woman make holes all over the field, then drop in the seed, but there is no attempt to sow the seed in straight lines. Occasionally ground-nuts are sown in the village beds after scattering the mounds dug there for previous crops (*ukupasa*), but the yield is not reckoned so good by this method.

If the field is overgrown with weeds it will be cleared in February. Otherwise there is no work till the harvest in May. Then the women go out to pull up the ground-nuts (*ukufuke mbalala*). They work in threes and fours, each catching hold of a plant with her left hand and hoeing up the roots with her right. Then they sit down in front of a pile of plants and shake the roots free of earth and remove the nuts. The digging and carrying of the ground-nuts is quite a serious task and may take the women a week or two. Temporary granaries are sometimes made in the fields to store the nuts until they can be removed to the village. Nuts overlooked at harvest spring up the next season, and these self-sown nuts (*shya makoka*) are considered quite an important source of food. Ground-nuts are an old crop, and there are innumerable medicines mixed with the seeds at sowing (*icibyalilo*). No first-fruit rites are performed in this case, but a queer usage survives by

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244 which a man can ask his friend for a handful from a new basket of nuts without possibility of refusal. This is known as *ukushiliko mutwe* (to take the taboo off the head). I cannot explain the custom.

241 *Other crops—Mound-cultivation.* Most other crops the Bemba plants on mounds (*mputa*) raised above the ground. These he makes either in the old burnt gardens, after three years use usually, or else in the beds round the village. The mounds are irregularly spaced all over a garden.[1] Of 10 measured *mputa* the average height when new was 2 feet, the diameter across the base 6½ feet. Those intended for cassava are usually built about 3 feet high because of the length of the root of the crop. When the Bemba use the word *ukulima* (to hoe) it is usually mound-making they mean. On mounds the Bemba plants roots such as cassava and sweet potatoes; legumes, i.e. beans, peas, cow-peas; cucurbits; and grains, i.e. maize and Kaffir corn. He thinks legumes and root crops are better suited to mound-cultivation because of their habit of growth. He says the trailing vines of the legumes spread over the surface of the *mputa*, and the cassava roots strike down into the newly dug soil. He explains, too, that *mputa* are raised out of the damp in the wet weather and that the roots of the plants are thus kept from rotting. But he also uses the method as a means of renewing the soil, and it does, in fact, expose a new surface of earth to the air. When the soil is old, he says, you must dig it up into *mputa*; and it is part of the regular cycle of cultivation in the old burnt gardens to dig up mounds in the third or fourth year.

Bemba make *mputa* of two types, from turf and from old soil. Round a new village they cut clods of turf with the hoe (*ukusapika*) and pile up the tussocks of grass in heaps. Earth is then flung on top to a depth of a few inches (*ukushikila*). This is heavy work and should be done by men. New *mputa* of this type are known as *mputa shya nsokwela* (mounds of the foundation, i.e. of a village). They may be made in the dry weather (May-September) and allowed to stand while the vegetation rots inside. The value of decaying vegetation is apparently recognized by some gardeners. One explained to me that richness (*umufundo*) was obtained in this way because 'things have rotted inside' (*ifintu fyabola mukati*).

[171] [1] Daryll Forde states that among the Yaköe, a Semi-Bantu people on the Cross River, S. Nigeria, these mounds are so evenly spaced by the natives by eye that he was able to estimate the size of a field by counting them. op. cit., p. 31. This is not so among the Bemba.

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is only practised in old gardens when the soil has been softened by pulling up some previous crop.[1] Natives say that the seeds get warm in the earth, while it is still 'hot', and these sowings ripen the earliest. Cucurbits, maize, and legumes, except peas, may be planted in this way. All crops can be sown in the early rains, except the main millet supply (*amale yakalamba*), and in the mid-rains everything except maize, which is said to be injured by the heavy fall then. Only legumes can be sown advantageously at the end of the rains, and then they are planted for leaf-relish only, since the pods, ripening late in the year, are considered to be too small and hard to be of much use. Double crops are only obtained in the case of the cow-peas.

Cassava and sweet potatoes are propagated from cuttings at any time during the rains. Technically speaking, the men plant the cassava and women the sweet potatoes, although this division of work is not very strictly kept. The cassava cuttings are taken carefully, the cut being made just below a nodule of the stalk. Cassava, which has seen two or three years' rains, is sufficiently mature for this purpose, and occasionally bundles of stalks are roughly put into the ground in October or November, to be used later for cuttings when required. Sweet potatoes seem to be shoved in anyhow, leaves, root, or stalk—'Sweet potatoes? They just like to grow! You can stick in any part—it is their habit to grow (*umusango uabo*).' Sweet potatoes are ready for eating after the wet weather is over, but cassava is at its best after the second or third season's rain.

Thus it will be clear that the planning of successive sowings is a matter of some importance, and the Bemba sometimes use considerable ingenuity in arranging early and late planting and the use of quick- and slow-maturing varieties of seed. At one village,[2] which had at the time plenty of male and female labour, I saw the village beds laid out in an orderly series, with beans and peas at every different stage: just germinated; two inches above the ground; eight inches above it; beginning to clamber and beginning to ripen; but very often the work was not so successfully organized, and the different owners' gardens looked as though each woman had sown when and what she could, according to whether her

[1] e.g. the millet sown as a third-year crop after the ground-nuts of the previous year have been rooted up. Cf. p. 317.

[2] Mucaka, near Citimukulu. April 1933.

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241 they ripen. There is no general harvest of the crops and the process is known as *ukusaba* (to gather) rather than *ukusepa*, reserved for the reaping of the millet proper. In fact, all these subsidiary crops are known as *ifyasabasaba*, i.e. things to be gathered, not reaped. Each pumpkin or cucumber, whether grown in the millet gardens or on the village beds, is watched with loving care as it ripens, and its shape and size is constantly described and discussed. Women visit their distant gardens every other day to pick each vegetable as it reaches perfection, and this coming and going between village and garden makes quite heavy work at the end of the rains. Maize is also picked cob by cob, as it ripens, since the Bemba do not store this food, but eat it fresh. They do not even enjoy eating it half a day old. There is a curious belief that the cobs should not be stripped off the stalk inside a *icifwani* garden, but the whole stem itself cut down and carried out—'It is a custom of respect to the maize' (*umusango ua mucinshi*). Legume pods are gathered as they are needed, as an English woman picks peas from her vegetable garden, except for the pods or leaves which require to be stored (cf. Chap. V). Root crops are dug up as required.

Additional Methods of Cultivation. Besides their new and old burnt gardens and their village beds, the Bemba know several subsidiary methods of cultivation which they practise at certain times and in particular localities. These include (i) Livingstone potato gardens (*ifibundu*), (ii) river-side gardens for dry-weather cultivation (*icibela*).

244 (i) *Ifibundu.* The Livingstone potato is only grown in certain areas, in spite of being one of the oldest crops. I found it planted most extensively near Citimukulu's village, whether because the soil was considered specially suitable, or because old customs linger in this area, I do not know. The *ifibundu* beds are prepared in a more elaborate manner than any other Bemba garden-bed. Long grasses are first pulled up (*ukuseba*), and then the grass tussocks are broken up with a hoe (*ukukontaula*). After this comes the characteristic *ifibundu* process known as *ukushima*, which means ordinary hoeing followed by prodding the ground with the apex of the hoe to break it up, and scattering it until it forms a fine soil. Such beds are prepared in May or June, after the rains are over, but before the ground has become too hard. An improvident gardener may wait till later, but he will give himself harder work. The *mumbu* are propagated by two methods—sowing the potato itself

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and striking cuttings from the plant. The seed potatoes are planted half at a time, and begin to sprout when the weather gets warm. They are not ripe for eating till the following rains, when the gardeners dig them up from time to time to test them.

The potatoes grown from cuttings are planted in September. About that time the natives cut off the leaves and stalks of the *mumbu* level with the ground, for fear that the potatoes already formed in the soil should begin to sprout again with the rains. But the shoots should not be thrown away. 'They will swell into roots like a pumpkin does, and will begin to run out into the ground.' The rest of the *ifibundu* bed, left vacant for the purpose, is therefore re-planted with cuttings and the potatoes are ready to be dug in the subsequent May.

Natives seem to consider that there is something romantic about the cultivation of *mumbu* and that it is 'distinguished' to have an *ifibundu* bed. Besides this, the potatoes ripen at the end of the rains, i.e. the time when supplies are shortest.

(ii) *Icibela.* These are dry-weather gardens made near river beds. I saw them made among the mixed Bemba-Bisa peoples near Shiwa Ndandu, but not elsewhere. The cultivator digs up the turf into mounds and then leaves these upturned sods to dry. Then he sets fire to this dried grass and covers each mound with earth. These gardens may be planted as early as August or September, as the soil is sufficiently damp, and by this means different subsidiary crops are secured very early in the year.

Attitude to different crops. When the Bemba grow millet they are not only producing their favourite food and working at their favourite task, but they are engaged on a whole series of activities which have rich traditional and emotional associations for them. None of the subsidiary crops arouse such interest, but each has its own value to the native, based on its historical associations, its importance as food, its magic properties, or the time and care it takes to grow. All these attitudes affect Bemba food production.

For instance, ground-nuts are a favourite food and grown on a sufficient scale to make the cycle of planting and harvest part of the regular routine of the year. The people seemed to take pleasure in talking of ground-nut cultivation and of the state of the crop. They use 'medicine' to grow it, as has been stated, but otherwise little ritual surrounds its use. Kaffir corn, on the other hand,

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no longer at all important as food. These are the *mumbu* potato just described and the little cucumbers, *amankolobwe*. First-fruit rites and sowing ceremonies are still performed for both, although they are not grown universally. First-fruit rites are done in the case of maize, but its cultivation is evidently not considered as interesting, by a long way, as that of the Kaffir corn. The cycle of its planting and harvest is not an important rhythm in the agricultural year, and the Bemba do not value the crop as food very highly, as we saw. It is just a subsidiary crop and nothing more.

Legumes are a necessary relish, but I never heard of their cultivation described with special interest, and since these are usually planted a few at a time, like garden vegetables in Europe, there is no such thing as a bean or pea harvest as a communal activity. The cow-pea is the legume crop with the greatest historic interest. First-fruits and sowing ceremonies are performed for it, and a sauce made of *ililanda* is used to pour daily over the chief's dead body while it is being dried and preserved. The common *icilemba* bean is the most used as food, and these seeds, from their variegated colours, are used to decorate the clay images used in the girls' initiation ceremony. Pumpkins and gourds are an old Bantu crop, and among the Bemba, as elsewhere, rites of first-fruits and sowing are performed over them. Women speak of their cucurbit crops with special interest. They watch the gourds form, laugh and talk about their different shapes, and carry curiously formed vegetables to their friends to see. These plants ripen, too, in the hunger season, and hence their coming is hailed with delight.

Cassava and sweet potatoes are the easiest of all crops to grow and should appeal to the Bemba on that account, but the people apparently despise them as food (cf. pp. 52–3), however unjustifiably. Cassava is associated with no sort of ritual whatsoever. The natives who were encouraged to grow these root crops in increased quantities during the locust raids apparently diminished their planting after Government pressure ceased.

(*c*) *The Sequence of Crops.*

The next point of interest for discussion is the length of time the Bemba are able to use their land. It is evident at once that they have no conception that the fertility of a garden can be more or less permanently maintained by means of a fixed rotation of crops,